

State Policy Learning Table

BUILD Initiative & Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

**Diversity Matters:
Issues, Challenges, & Rewards**
associated with
Teaching in a Diverse Society

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Diversity Matters

An Overview

- Overview of Diversity Matters – Issues and Concerns
- Possible Strategies for Stimulating Statewide Understanding, Interest, and Action
- Promoting Effective Teaching and Learning (*focus on Pre K – Grade 3*)

Diversity: A Matter for ALL Children

- Diversity is increasing in our nation's classrooms
- Aspects of diversity are numerous
- Diversity exists across racial and ethnic groups

Diversity *and the* Learning Environment

- Acknowledging and responding to the diversity that exists among students is important.
- Providing learning environments in which teachers and students become acquainted with and respect the diversity of others is important.

Diversity and Competence

- Competence is not tied to a particular cultural or linguistic background.
- Students' language, culture, and experiential backgrounds are worthy sources for literacy activities; they provide a base for expanding language.

Socioeconomic Diversity & Student Achievement

Family income and school achievement are closely linked.

Some related factors:

- Nutrition
- Health care
- Overall family stability

Table 5. Averages for measures of parent and child language and test scores

| Measures and scores | Families | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------|------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | 13 Professional | | 23 Working-class | | 6 Welfare | |
| | Parent | Child | Parent | Child | Parent | Child |
| Pretest score ^a | 41 | | 31 | | 14 | |
| IQ score at age 3 | | 117 | | 107 | | 79 |
| Recorded vocabulary size | 2,176 | 1,116 | 1,498 | 749 | 974 | 525 |
| Average utterances per hour ^b | 487 | 310 | 301 | 223 | 176 | 168 |
| Average different words per hour | 382 | 297 | 251 | 216 | 167 | 149 |

^aSee this chapter, endnote 1, for description of the pretest and testing conditions.

^bParent utterances and different words were averaged over 13–36 months of child age. Child utterances and different words were averaged for the four observations when the children were 33–36 months old.

"Meaningful Differences"
Hart & Risley (1995)

Linguistic Diversity a Key Element of Teaching & Learning

*Instruction must include attention to:
English Language Learners & students who speak a dialect of English other than standard English.*

Student competence in standard English is a worthy and appropriate goal of the school. Learning English/standard English should be offered as an opportunity for expansion of a child's language repertoire and not as a rejection of home language.

Diversity: A Matter for ALL Children & ALL of the Educators Who Work With Them

The culturally responsive knowledge and practice of educators can play a significant role in how well students learn.

State Leadership
is Critically Important.

Launching a Statewide Plan High Quality Early Education **Focus on Diversity**

**Some Possible Strategies
for
Stimulating Statewide
Understanding, Interest & Action**

Link Key Issues of Concern with Issues Related to Diversity

Some Possibilities:

- Develop a Statewide Plan: Overarching Goal – “Insuring High Quality Education for **ALL**”
- ***A much needed focus could be the need to – Link Standards/Instruction/Assessment with an emphasis on addressing issues related to Diversity***

Some Possibilities, cont.

Include all those involved in education. Include leaders and practitioners at all levels.

**State/Districts/Schools/Classrooms/
Teacher Preparation Institutions**

Insure Parent & Community involvement throughout

Focus on both **Policy** and **Practice**

Some Possibilities, cont.

Possibility – a 3 year plan –

Year 1 – mobilize; focus on need to continue and improve the many good things in place; look critically at the things that need improvement; take a close look at diverse populations/needs. Work toward improved outcomes for ALL.

Work together to create a long-term plan for Professional Development (Prof. Learning Communities)

**Share ideas; initiate pilot projects;
reflect/review**

Some Possibilities, cont.

- Consider a title/focus – *consider Linking Standards/Instruction/Assessment for **ALL** Students*

- Special attention would be given to –

The Diversity among Learners

And the adjustments that must be made to support their success.

Some Possibilities, cont.

Year 2

- Be more deliberate about projects/pilots; share/reflect; assess; revise.
- Continue to acknowledge that good things were already going on and these continue to improve.
- *Stress the fact that this effort is on behalf of ALL the children in the State high & low achievers.*

Some Possibilities, cont.

Year 3 – **Continue as in Year 2.**

Based on results of sharing, reflection, and revision, create a long-term plan/model for continued implementation.

Note: The individuals involved will change over time. Nevertheless, creating a Statewide model/perspective for both policy and practice will have a lasting impact on ALL involved over time.

A Closer Look at Implications for Teaching & Learning Pre K – Grade 3

Common Misunderstandings and Misapplications

- Poor/minority children are not as capable as others.
- The standards (State/CCSS/other) are too hard for young children – especially poor/minority/ELLs.
- Play has been eliminated from the curriculum.
- Lists of Foundational Skills (NELP;CCSS)* must be taught sequentially and mastered before real reading and writing begin.

*National Early Literacy Panel Common Core State Standards

The Foundational Skills National Early Literacy Panel (NELP)

- NELP finding: Six Precursor Literacy Skills (B-5) with medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development even when IQ and SES were accounted for.
- **Alphabet Knowledge**
- **Phonological Awareness**
- **Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) of letters or digits**
- **RAN of objects of colors**
- **Writing (letters)/Writing Name**
- **Phonological memory** – ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time.

The Foundational Skills Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Foundational Skills (K-5)

- Print Concepts
- Phonological Awareness
- Phonics and Word Recognition
- Fluency

Stress is placed on APPLICATION

Key Design Considerations Common Core State Standards

Curriculum based on the CCSS includes:

- An integrated model of literacy. Language arts (listening; speaking; reading; writing) integrated with each other and with content of interest and importance to children
- Focus on thinking and problem solving
- Research and media skills blended into the Standards as a whole
- Focus on coherence in instruction & assessment; Keep notion of *spiraling* in mind – involves same standard with increasing difficulty

Key Instructional Practices *that can be Adjusted to Support ALL Learners*

- Teach for Thinking
- Scaffold Instruction –

Scaffolding Involves:

- Modeling and Demonstrating (as children watch)
- Guided Collaboration with students
- Monitoring and Assisting as students work independently

Assess & differentiate follow-up according to need

Key Instructional Practices *that can be Adjusted to Support ALL Learners*

Organizing for Differentiated Instruction – plan the day so that routines are established for both group and independent activities.

- Whole Group – introduce content/concepts to whole group; Note where problems and unusual successes exist. Provide time for follow-up.
- Small Group/One-to-one – Work with small groups/ individuals during follow up. Groups/individuals are not long-term. Ask for explanations; provide tailored guidance; note problems that exist; extend learning for those who are ready.

Instructional Practices that Support Child Learning Opportunities

Distinguish between Skills & Strategies

Skills are performed the same way all the time.

Knowing the sound of the digraph ph is a skill.

Skill instruction relies on drill and practice.

Strategies involve problem solving during the construction of meaning.

Figuring out an unknown word using phonics, meaning, and sentence structure is a strategy.

Searching for and using available information to determine an author's meaning is a strategy.

Focus on Meaning

Move from Whole – to Part – to Whole

Working WITH Parents

WORK TOWARD A COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS:

- Focus on helping parents alter/expand their view of what is important. Then share/show them some possibilities.
- Keep in mind that offer a few quick ideas with no background knowledge about why they are important, won't go very far.
- Know that many families are under a great deal of stress – especially Moms. *Stability* is a key factor for both parents and children.
- Avoid focusing on the negative. Talk about what “WE” can do, rather than why “we can't do it.”

The Rewards

Once again –

Attention to Diversity and its role in the establishment of Effective Policies and Practices that support teaching and learning can play a significant role in student achievement and their overall well being.

Leadership is Critically Important
and Rewarding for ALL Involved